

# Adding Activity to Your Life

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# A Fresh Approach to a Fit Life

*Life has changed. Cars, computers, and high-tech comforts mean fewer chances for movement as part of our daily lives. And we're busier too. So we find less time for regular activity. Thank goodness research now shows it's okay to use short bits of activity to be healthier and more energetic. If you're already doing more organized, intense exercise though, stay with it! That can make you even stronger and more fit.*

## Every Little Bit Counts

Do you still think you have to exercise hard for 30 minutes every day to be healthier? You don't. And you don't have to change your clothes, go somewhere special, or get sweaty if you don't want to.

You simply need to let your heart pick up a few beats, your breath move a little faster, and your legs take a few extra steps. This can be planned into your normal day. You can even do this when you're at work, shopping, doing chores, or having week-end fun.

An active lifestyle also means

taking every chance you get to stretch or strengthen your muscles.



## What's Holding You Back?

If you're like most people, lack of time is the biggest problem. But that's the beauty of this fresh approach: You just use the time you have in a new way.

What are other roadblocks to fitness? No babysitter, bad weather, or inactive family members are a few. Write down your biggest barriers:

Use the ideas below to help you over your roadblocks. (You'll find more tips on pages 7, 9, and 11.)

- Take the kids with you.
- Add variety. If you can't do one activity, choose another that day.
- Announce your goals to your family and friends.

Write down two things that can help you be more active:

This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional healthcare. Check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

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## Why Get Fit?

It might help to think about why you want to get fit. That can get you started and keep you going. Check what's important to you:

- \_\_\_ Energy to play with the kids or grandkids
- \_\_\_ Less chance of heart disease or other illness
- \_\_\_ More energy for a favorite hobby
- \_\_\_ Feeling more attractive
- \_\_\_ Losing weight
- \_\_\_ Feeling less stressed

What are other reasons?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## Something for Everyone

These new directions in fitness mean everyone can find activities to fit his or her needs. You can start with one of the three stages below. Stage 1 gets you going. Stage 2 is a goal to work toward. Stage 3 means even better fitness. Mix and match stages to fit your schedule.

**1. Healthy Habit.** Change the way you think about doing things. Find many short movement breaks of 1 to 2 minutes throughout the day. Then do something active instead of just sitting, driving, or letting someone else do it for you.

**2. Lifestyle Movement.** Try to lengthen your short activity breaks to 8 to 10 minutes each. They should feel like a brisk walk, or as if you have a bus to catch. Your goal now is a total of 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days.

**3. Planned Exercise.** This is scheduled exercise and recreational sports, such as walking, cycling, swimming, or basketball. Aim for 30 or more minutes of nonstop moderate to vigorous activity.

## What You'll Learn

On the following pages, you'll learn more about:

- Reaping healthy rewards
- Getting started
- Fitting activity into your life
- Finding ways to be active
- Defining what fitness really is
- Sticking with it



# Reaping Healthy Rewards

*The smallest first steps can bring big gains in health and fitness. Move a little more than you usually do, and you'll feel better physically and mentally. You'll tire less quickly. And you'll have more energy to enjoy friends, family, and hobbies. Plus, you'll be healthier.*

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## A Stronger and Happier You

Even before you see the difference, you'll feel the difference. Here are three ways you'll benefit from more activity:

**Physical Fitness.** You'll have more stamina. You'll also enjoy recreation more. And you'll keep your strength and independence as you age.

**Mental Fitness.** You'll manage stress better, be less tense, think more clearly, and maybe even sleep better.

**Long-term Health.** Your risk of some diseases may go down. This includes heart disease, osteoporosis (thinning bones), some cancers, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

**Note:** Do you have any physical limitations or chronic conditions? If so, check with your doctor or other healthcare provider to find out what is safe for you. Just remember, everybody can find a way to get and stay more active. And everyone benefits, too.



# Short Activity Breaks Can Add Up

For years, scientists thought people had to do longer, more intense daily exercise to be healthy. Intense activity is still great for high levels of fitness. But recent studies show there's more than one way to stay healthy.

Several short activity breaks during the day can add up to better health. You don't have to fit your life around activity. Instead, you can fit activity into your daily life.



## Will I Lose Weight?

Many of us would like to lose or keep off a few pounds. Being more active each day and building muscle can help. Here's how:

- Being active burns calories. You burn nearly twice as many calories just walking slowly as you do sitting.
- Muscle burns more calories than fat. So the more muscle you build up from activity, the more calories you burn.
- If you add more muscle, you'll use more calories even when you're inactive.
- Being active helps you retain more muscle as you age. More muscle means it'll be easier to control your weight.

## Check Your Health First

If you answer "yes" to any of the questions below, you should talk to your doctor before beginning a fitness program:

1. Has a doctor ever said you have heart trouble?
2. Do you ever have chest pains?
3. Do you often feel faint or have dizzy spells?
4. Has a doctor ever said your blood pressure is too high?
5. Has a doctor ever said that you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by exercise?
6. Do you take any prescription medicines, for problems like heart trouble or high blood pressure?

If you are over age 50 and not used to exercise, you should start slowly. See a doctor before continuing, if any answers change to a "yes."

# A Healthy Habit



**“All I did was take the stairs more.”**

“I put in such long hours at work that finding time for regular exercise seemed impossible. So I just started doing little things. Like I took the stairs instead of the elevator to get to my desk. Not just once a day, but

sometimes six or eight times up and down three flights to get coffee or take a message to a coworker. I was surprised how much better I felt after a few weeks. I’ve even lost a couple of pounds!”

**1** *This is the first stage. A healthier life starts with a few small steps that become habits. Activity is one of those steps. We need to change how we think about the way we do everyday things. For example, choose stairs (be active) instead of the elevator (not active). That way, movement becomes a natural part of your daily life. You don’t have to go anywhere or buy anything special.*

## How to Get Started



Take a minute to look at your day. From start to finish, there are tiny bits of time that could add up to a gold mine of activity. You just have to find them, then plan the movement. It may be while you’re waiting for water to boil or for a computer to start.

All you need is a total of 30 minutes of movement on most days to find better health and help you to the next stage.

If that sounds like a lot, then imagine it as a collection of 1- or 2-minute movement breaks. Suddenly, that’s something anyone can do!

And you can do whatever suits your taste. Your choices will always be ones that work best for you.



## Act Like a Kid

What young child ever wants to sit still? Kids never plan activity. They just move. Here are some ideas to help you act more like a kid:

- Be a participant, not an observer. Forget the sidelines. Jump in for a game of Ping-Pong or to shoot a few baskets.
- Dress to move. Comfortable shoes and clothing help you want to move more. Stand more at meetings. Or walk to the farthest water fountain on a break.
- Seek active fun. Kids don’t sit and chat over soda. They jump and run. So instead of sitting over coffee to visit with a friend, stroll through a park or mall.





# Just Move

Now you get the idea: Think active. Think like a kid. Build bits of movement into what you already do. Let's look at some examples of ways you can start:

**Instead of:** sitting in the bleachers at your child's soccer game or in the doctor's waiting room,

**Try to:** do a lap around the field or take a quick walk up and down the stairs.

**Instead of:** choosing electric or power tools and appliances,

**Try to:** whip, mix, mow, or hammer by hand.

**Instead of:** sending an e-mail or voicemail at work,

**Try to:** walk to your coworker to talk in person.

**Instead of:** just sitting while watching TV or driving a car,

**Try to:** tighten your abdominal (stomach) muscles for a minute, or stretch your shoulders or neck.

**Instead of:** taking an elevator or escalator at the mall,

**Try to:** walk up the escalator or find stairs to use.

Write down some ways you can get in some healthy daily activity:

**Instead of:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Try to:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Instead of:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Try to:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Tips for Sticking With It

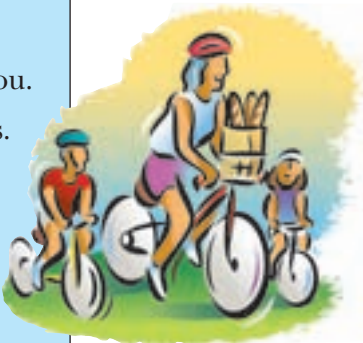
- Get your family to join you.
- Promise yourself rewards.
- Set daily or weekly goals.
- Track your progress.

Write down what will help you to stick with it:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



# Lifestyle Movement



**“I got outdoors more.”**

“Being a mother takes so much time because the kids always need something. That makes it hard to plan activity. But I really wanted to tone up and feel a little healthier. So I started taking the dog on three

short walks each day. If the kids were home from school, they’d come along with me on a bike. Or I’d trade off watching them with a neighbor. Now I feel healthier, and I have more energy to play with the kids, too!”

**2** *In this second stage, you try to make each activity break longer and more brisk. The total time you move each day will still be 30 minutes. But longer activity breaks can mean even greater health benefits. That’s what the U.S. Surgeon General’s report on physical activity and health says. Combine these longer breaks with the Stage 1 activity described on pages 6–7 for even greater health benefits. And you still don’t have to go anywhere special because the activity is part of your lifestyle.*

## What “More” Means

A total of 30 minutes on most days—that’s still your goal.

It becomes “more”

because of the way you reach that total:

- Find 8 to 10 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day, to move briskly.
- Each time you’re active, feel your breathing and your pulse get a little faster than usual. But don’t go so fast that you’re too out of breath to talk.
- Look for chances to stretch or strengthen your legs, back, abdomen, and arms, too.



## Whenever You Can

Be ready to use a few extra minutes when they come up:

- At work: Pick a lunch spot a few blocks away and stride there and back. Use your break for a brisk walk.
- At home: Ride bikes with your kids. Use an exercise bike in the living room while you watch TV.
- On errands: Park a few blocks away from where you need to go and walk there briskly. “Power-walk” in malls by doing a fast lap or two before shopping.
- At play: Go hiking with friends instead of sitting on a bench. Stride through street fairs instead of sitting in a movie.







## Use Your Whole Body

You're now working your heart and lungs for 10 minutes a few times a day. Try adding a few more activities for the other muscles in your body, too. That way, they get stronger and more flexible.

### Strengthen your:

- Chest: Do mini-pushups against a wall.
- Lower legs: Go up and down slowly on your toes while you're filing papers or washing dishes.
- Upper legs: Lower yourself slowly into a chair.

### Stretch your:

- Back: Arch your back like a cat when you get up from a chair.
- Shoulders and chest: Lift your arms overhead and reach tall while waiting for your computer to warm up.
- Lower legs: Raise your toes and press them against a wall (with your heel on the ground).

## Tips for Sticking With It

- Plan your activity by writing it on a calendar.
- Find a buddy at work to walk with during a lunch break.
- Take your kids with you on a short walk after dinner.
- Post a reminder list of the benefits of activity where you can see it.
- Set an alarm to tell you when it's time for an activity break.

Write down what will help you to stick with it:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



# Planned Exercise



## **“I’d rather be pedaling my bicycle.”**

“For me, the real joy of exercise is setting aside some time a few days each week to work out hard. It’s ‘me’ time I really need to just forget about everything else. Sometimes it feels a little stressful to get there, but when

I’m done, I’m much more relaxed. I know I’m more fit and stronger than I’ve ever been. Even my grandkids tell me they’re proud of their grandpa! And I want to stay healthy a long time to watch my family grow up.”

**3** *Maybe you want to get even more health and fitness benefits. Or you want to lose more weight. Perhaps you just prefer organized recreation. This third stage could be for you. This step means more structure and a little more intensity. You may need to go somewhere special, change into different clothes, and set aside time. If you want to mix and match stages, you could do planned exercise once or twice each week (Stage 3). Learn a new sport, join a recreational team, or go to an exercise class. Then you can do lifestyle movement (Stage 2) the rest of the week. It’s your choice.*

## **Add to Your Activity**

Planned exercise can mean many things, but it usually means increasing the intensity. How do you do that? By doing your activity one or more of these ways:

- Longer: Do 30 minutes or more without a break instead of 10 minutes several times a day.
- Faster: Hike, run, or skate fast enough to raise your heart rate moderately—as if you had walked fast to catch a bus.
- More often: Take part in your activity 4 to 6 times a week instead of 1 to 3 times.

See page 12 for more on how to measure exercise intensity.



## **Not Just Gym Class**

In the past, researchers said you needed to do set amounts of formal exercise at a certain pace to achieve health and fitness results. That’s still fine, but it’s not the only way to get results.

You can reach your health and fitness goals with:

- Team sports, like basketball or soccer
- Social or recreational activities, like hiking or dancing
- Individual exercise, like cycling, swimming, or skating
- Group fitness classes, like aerobic classes or weight training



# Starting Again

Perhaps you used to exercise regularly but haven't for weeks, months, or years. Maybe you just got busy or out of the habit. Missing some time doesn't mean you failed. Or that you should give up. It does mean your first steps back should be small. You need to work back slowly to your earlier level. Let your body get used to the activity again. You won't get hurt, and you'll enjoy yourself more. It helps to plan for times that might force you to miss your activity, such as a summer vacation or busy holidays. Look ahead and write down when and what you can do, even if it's less or different. For example, take good walking shoes on a vacation and tour by foot.

What might make you miss your scheduled exercise?

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What are ways you can plan around that?

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# Safety First

Whatever your activity, think about safety needs:

- Wear the right safety gear and shoes for your activity.
- Drink plenty of water during and after workouts.
- Wear light-colored clothing if you're out when it's dark.
- Carry ID with you if you're out alone. And be sure someone knows where you're going.
- If you're on foot, travel against traffic (except on blind corners). If you're on a bike, go with traffic, obeying automobile signals and traffic flow.



# Tips for Sticking With It

- Find a workout partner or sports club. If you know someone is expecting you, you'll be less likely to skip your workout.
- Pack a workout bag with everything you need. Then it's ready when you are.
- Choose a variety of activities so you'll stay interested. Make it fun!

What will help you to stick with it?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



# Measure Your Pace

*Many people know when they’re moving at a good pace for them. It’s a pace that’s not too hard or too easy. But there are ways to measure your exercise intensity. If you’re starting with Stage 1 activity, measuring your pace isn’t needed. If you want to reach Stage 2, knowing what “brisk” feels like can help (remember, it’s like the effort of hurrying to catch a bus). At Stage 3, you will pay more attention to pace.*

## Why Pace Matters

Getting your heart to work at the right pace means you’ll develop better aerobic endurance. This happens because your heart gets stronger and more efficient from the challenge. A stronger heart can pump more oxygen to your muscles. Then you don’t tire as quickly during your hobbies, sports, or daily activities.

## How Does It Feel?

Listening to your body is the best way to decide if an exercise pace is right for you. If you do too much, you’ll tire too quickly or get hurt. If you do too little, you won’t get the health rewards you want.

**Note:** During or after exercise, you should not feel sick, dizzy, or very tired. After you’re done, you should feel normal in about 10 minutes. If you’re very tired or sore the next day, you may have exercised too hard.

## Your Target Heart Rate

When you exercise, you should keep your heart rate within a safe range. This is called your target heart rate range. It is measured by taking your pulse. (If you don’t know how to take your pulse, ask your healthcare provider to show you how.) Take your pulse regularly as you exercise to see if you’re within your target heart rate range. When you exercise at the right heart rate, you burn calories and strengthen your heart safely.

## Finding Your Range

Your target heart rate is based on your age and health. So first ask your healthcare provider how

much exercise is safe for you. If you’re healthy, you can use the chart shown here to find your target heart rate range. If your heart rate goes too high, slow down until you’re back in your range.

Target Heart Rate Chart Source: American Heart Association. American Heart Association guide to heart attack treatment, recovery, and prevention. New York: Random House, 1996: 239.

| TARGET HEART RATE |  |                                    |
|-------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Age (years)       | Target Heart Rate Range (beats per minute) | Maximum Heart Rate (do not exceed) |
| 20                | 100–150                                    | 200                                |
| 25                | 98–146                                     | 195                                |
| 30                | 95–142                                     | 190                                |
| 35                | 93–138                                     | 185                                |
| 40                | 90–135                                     | 180                                |
| 45                | 88–131                                     | 175                                |
| 50                | 85–127                                     | 170                                |
| 55                | 83–123                                     | 165                                |
| 60                | 80–120                                     | 160                                |

# Balancing Your Fitness

*Until now, we've talked mostly about aerobic activity where your heart beats more quickly and you're breathing faster. There are two other parts of a fitness program: flexibility and strength. Both are important for balanced fitness. Planned exercise sessions should also include warm-up and cool-down periods.*

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## Warming Up and Cooling Down

Good warm-ups and cool-downs can keep you from getting hurt when you do more intense aerobic activities that last 30 minutes or longer. You don't need to warm up or cool down with short Stage 1 or 2 activity.



Warm up by starting your activity slowly, or walking or jogging slowly for about 5 minutes. That warms your muscles and helps your joints move more easily. This helps protect you from injury. After you warm up, stop to stretch a little before you start your activity.

A cool-down is like a warm-up in reverse. Gradually slow down your activity, or walk or jog slowly. After about 5 minutes, you can stop moving. Slowing to a stop lets your body return to its normal state little by little. Now is the best time to stretch since your muscles are very warm.

## Stretch and Strengthen

Flexible and strong muscles are important for overall fitness. Stretching and getting stronger can also keep you from getting hurt. Staying injury-free will help you stick to your goals.

Remember, if you make your muscles work harder than they usually do, a little soreness is normal. But if your muscles hurt after you're done, or for several days, you probably did too much.

Try stretches like the ones on page 14.

Remember to do your longest stretching after you cool down, when your muscles are still warm. A short stretch after you warm up is just to loosen up a little. Light stretching is possible anytime.

Try strength exercises like the ones on page 15. Doing strength exercises for your muscles can keep your bones stronger. Making your muscles strong also helps you enjoy your favorite hobbies, play with the kids, or stay independent as you age.



# Stretching

*Light stretching to relax can be done anytime. If you want to stretch for better flexibility, be sure your muscles are warmed up first. Hold each position for 20 to 30 seconds. You will feel a gentle pull, but it should not hurt. Hold each stretch steady without bouncing. Breathe normally and deeply when you hold. Repeat the stretches 1 to 3 times on each side.*

## Standing Hamstring

**This stretches the back of the upper leg.**

Stand with one heel on a low step in front of you.

- Slightly bend the back leg. Keep the other leg straight but not locked.
- Put your hands on the thigh above the bent knee to support your back. You can also put one hand on a rail for balance.
- Push your hips back as if you were sitting down.
- Keep your back straight and your neck relaxed.



## Knee-to-Chest

**This stretches the low back and hips.**



Lie on the floor.

- Lift one knee to your chest.
- Place your hands behind the lifted knee and pull it toward you.
- Keep the opposite leg straight and on the floor.

## Calf Lunge

**This stretches the calves.**

Stand facing a wall, about a foot away.

- Place both hands on a wall for balance. Put one foot behind you.
- Slightly bend the front knee. Keep the front heel down.
- Keep the back leg straight and the back heel down.
- Press your hips toward the wall.



## Overhead Reach

**This stretches the chest and shoulders.**

Stand or sit tall.

- Clasp your hands together over your head.
- Reach toward the ceiling with both hands.
- Pull your elbows slightly behind your ears.
- Keep your shoulders down.





# Strengthening

*These strengthening exercises can be done without a warm-up. Keep breathing while doing the exercises. Try to relax muscles you aren't using. Repeat each exercise 8 to 10 times, rest, then do it again (see special instructions for the Wall Sit). If that is too difficult, do fewer and build slowly. As you get stronger, do more.*

## Knee Pushups

**This strengthens the shoulders, chest, and back.**



Lie face-down on the floor with your knees on the ground.

- Place your hands flat on the ground under your shoulders.
- Push your body up onto your hands and knees.
- Keep your back straight and your abdomen tight. Avoid dropping your head.
- Hold for one count, then lower in two counts.

## Curl-Ups

**This strengthens the abdominal muscles.**



Lie face-up on the ground with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.

- Place your hands on your upper legs.
- Reach your fingertips toward your knees by tightening your abdominal muscles. Only your head and shoulders will come off the ground. Look at your knees.
- Hold for two counts, then lower.

## Toe Raises

**This strengthens the calves.**

Stand with the balls of your feet on the edge of a step. Hold on to a rail for support if you want.

- Hang your heels below the edge.
- Rise up on your toes as high as you can.
- Hold for one count, then lower in two counts.

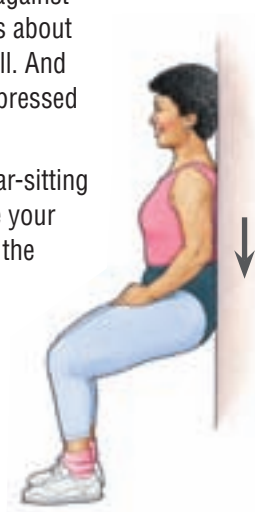


## Wall Sit

**This strengthens the upper legs.**

Stand with your back against a wall. Keep your heels about 18 inches from the wall. And keep your lower back pressed against the wall.

- Slide down into a near-sitting position. Stop before your thighs are parallel to the floor.
- Be sure to tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Hold for 6 to 10 counts. Return to standing. Repeat 8 to 10 times.



# Shifting into a New Lifestyle

*It's time to get started on the road to a healthier and more fit lifestyle. Pick what's right for you. Find something fun. Listen to your body. And use the tips throughout this booklet to help you stick with it.*

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## On Your Mark...

Do you want more information about fitness or your special needs? Contact your local community recreation center or senior center. Or try one of the groups below:

- **YMCA/YWCA**

[www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net)

Check your telephone directory under

"Exercise and Physical Fitness" for your local YMCA phone number.

- **President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports**

[www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)

## Get Set...

Take a few moments to plan your new lifestyle. Be sure to get the support of your friends and family. Think of rewards—such as a movie or a new magazine subscription—that you can give yourself for being successful.

## Go!

Take it one step at a time. You'll be on the way to discovering a stronger, happier, healthier you!

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**Consultant:**

William L. Haskell, PhD

**With contributions by:**

Lori Thein Brody, MS, PT, SCS, ATC

Lynda M. Razo, MEd

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